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THE
Commonweal
A Weekly Review of Public Affairs, Literature, and the Arts
THIRTY-FIFTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

week by week

THE BISHOPS ON RACE

AT THEIR RECENT annual meeting, the Catholic Bishops of the United States issued a statement entitled "Discrimination and the Christian Conscience." To our mind it is an admirable document—clear, concise, and, above all, animated by the highest Christian spirit of justice and charity.

Referring to their words on the same subject fifteen years ago, the Bishops stated that great strides had since been made toward the goal of interracial justice. "Unfortunately, however," they said, "it appears that in recent years . . . the march toward justice and equality has been slowed if not halted in some areas. The transcendent moral issues involved have become obscured, and possibly forgotten."

To these "transcendent moral issues" the Bishops then turned their own attention. "The heart of the race question is moral and religious. . . . If our attitude is governed by the great Christian law of love of neighbor and respect for his rights, then we can work out harmoniously the techniques for making legal, educational, economic and social adjustments. But if our hearts are poisoned by hatred, or even by indifference toward the welfare and rights of our fellow men, then our nation faces a grave internal crisis."

Can compulsive segregation be reconciled with the Christian view of man? No, said the Bishops, for two fundamental reasons.

First, enforced segregation by its very nature imposes a stigma of inferiority upon the segregated people. "Even if the now obsolete court doctrine of 'separate but equal' had been carried out to the fullest extent . . . there is nonetheless the judgment that an entire race, by the sole fact of race and regardless of individual qualities, is not fit to associate on equal terms with members of another race. We cannot reconcile such a judgment with the Christian view of man's nature and rights."

Secondly, whatever the advocates of "separate but equal" facilities say, "it is a matter of historical fact that segregation in our country has led to oppressive conditions and the denial of basic human rights for the Negro." In support of this statement the Bishops cited such fundamental fields as education, job opportunity and housing, and they point out: "Flowing from these areas of neglect and discrimination are problems of health and the sordid train of evils so often associated with the consequent slum conditions."

HERE, of course, is one of the painful paradoxes of the interracial question. As the Bishops pointed out, "One of the tragedies of racial oppression is that the evils we have cited are being used as excuses to continue the very conditions that so strongly fostered such evils." In short, segregation has been a root cause of countless evils, and now it is claimed that these very conditions make an end to segregation impossible.

The vicious circle must be broken. "Negro citizens . . . wish an education that does not carry with it any stigma of inferiority. They wish economic advancement based on merit and skill. They wish their civil rights as American citizens. . . . No one who truly loves God's children will deny them this opportunity."

How should Americans proceed toward this goal? "The problems we inherit today are rooted in decades, even centuries, of custom and cultural patterns. Changes in deep-rooted attitudes are not made overnight. . . . It is a sign of wisdom, rather than weakness, to study carefully the problems we face, to prepare for advances, and to by-pass the non-essential if it interferes with essential progress."

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The Bishops therefore equally deplored "gradualism that is merely a cloak for inaction" and "rash impetuosity that would sacrifice the achievements of decades in ill-timed and ill-considered ventures."

On interracial questions, the temptation to do nothing and call it prudence is always great. The Bishops faced this fact: "In concrete matters we distinguish between prudence and inaction by asking the question: 'Are we sincerely and earnestly acting to solve these problems?' " And the Bishops close by calling for such action: "We hope and earnestly pray that responsible and sober-minded Americans of all religious faiths, in all areas of our land, will seize the mantle of leadership from the agitator and the racist." In a rapidly deteriorating situation, the Bishops solemnly warned, "it is vital that we act now . . . quietly, courageously, and prayerfully before it is too late."

CHINESE CHALLENGE

IN MR. KHRUSHCHEV'S grandiose vision of the productive might of the Soviet Union by 1965, Communist China has been assigned a place. As the Russian leader sees it, China will by that time have an industrial capacity equal to that of Britain. If various recent visitors to the Chinese mainland are to be believed, here is one instance where Mr. Khrushchev has been guilty of pessimism. Despite China's initial industrial backwardness, that nation is making such giant strides under forced draft that its potential for the 1960's would seem to lie far beyond that of even the most technically advanced nation of only fifty millions.

There appears to be more and more reason that the other nations of Asia may look to China rather than to the Soviet Union (or the United States, for that matter) for the pattern for their industrial and agricultural expansion. For some years now Soviet Russia has itself operated as an industrialized nation; China, on the other hand, has recently had to start from scratch, much like its immediate neighbors. The argument that methods that are so successful in building up China are ideal for other underdeveloped Asian lands sounds particularly cogent to peoples who have registered little headway in their own struggle with poverty.

The bountiful harvests which Peiping is reporting this fall are having a telling effect in other lands. Kwantung Province is said to have trebled its production of rice this year, so that rationing has been discontinued in Canton. The arid terrain of Kansu Province is to be turned into productive farmland by such devices as a shelter belt of trees extending for three thousand miles. Some three million peasants are to be mobilized in an all-out drainage and irrigation drive that is to increase the food supply much further.

Alongside these asserted accomplishments and prospects of abundance are reports of widespread unrest. Purges in Shantung and Manchuria are severe enough to become known in the world outside. The amount of unmitigated coercion exercised upon China's virtually unlimited manpower in order to produce such results—or even a fraction of what is claimed—can only be imagined.

Achievement under such duress is hardly appealing to the Indian temperament. Yet New Delhi cannot help contrasting its own meager successes with the apparently substantiated claims of Peiping. As the *Christian Science Monitor* reports, Dr. Deshmukh, Indian Minister of Agriculture, has recently returned from a two-weeks' Chinese tour convinced that his compatriots should make a serious study of how the Chinese did it. Even without the lash the Chinese seem capable of harder and more sustained labor than their Indian contemporaries, and there are wide divergencies in the climatic and other conditions in the two countries. The Indian Minister feels, however, that the Chinese increase in output of sixty to ninety per cent in each province in a single year is too sensational to ignore (it compares with a forty per cent rise in the United States in the whole 1940-44 period).

While Communist China has been making these giant strides, India and the other Southeast Asia nations in the Colombo Plan have barely been able to keep their food production in advance of their growth in population. With this moderate increase in output, per capita food production in Southeast Asia is still below the inadequate figure it had reached before World War II.

NUCLEAR POLICY

THOMAS E. MURRAY, former member of the Atomic Energy Commission and now consultant to the Joint Congressional Committee on Atomic Energy, has raised his voice again in criticism of our nuclear research and armaments program. Mr. Murray's has been a voice crying in the wilderness, calling on the American people, in countless articles and speeches, to concern themselves with the immorality and peril of United States nuclear policy. Thus far, unfortunately, his counsel has been not only rejected but ignored.

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Mr. Murray's latest comments on this problem were given in an address on "Public Opinion, Public Policy, and the Problem of War," delivered at a meeting, in Washington, D.C., of the Catholic University of America Alumni Association. Mr. Murray declared that public opinion today on the questions of war and nuclear weapons is wildly irrational, marked either by panic or by apathy. To see any security in the accumulation of "ever-greater nuclear striking power" (the idea of "massive retaliation") is "a perilous illusion," according to Mr. Murray. But to rely on the opposite idea of "complete and universal disarmament" is, he said, an equally extreme and untenable position. Mr. Murray's thesis, which he has urged so many times in the past, is that the United States must formulate "a rational armament policy," the development and stockpiling of great numbers of low kiloton, tactical nuclear weapons, which are needed for "limited" military engagements.

The real danger to our security, Mr. Murray believes, is from the "limited" wars which we are not now capable of sustaining. "If we are inferior in stores of low-yield kiloton weapons," he explained, "we become vulnerable to a particularly insidious form of nuclear blackmail. In a war begun with limited weapons we might have to bear the onus and guilt, in our own eyes and before world opinion, of being the first to use weapons of mass destruction." Thus we must continue tests and development of these small nuclear weapons, which, he said, can be completely controlled and non-hazardous. Tests of the large, megaton-range weapons are undeniably dangerous to human health, Mr. Murray said, and should be stopped for this reason and because they are unnecessary, since "our weapons strength in the megaton range has already gone beyond rational bounds."

Mr. Murray's arguments are, as always, eminently informed and cogent, and we agree with much of what he says. The Administration policy of relying on the threat of "massive retaliation" has been shown to be increasingly inadequate to the realities of the international struggle. As we have said in the past, the "bigger bang for a buck" slogan for national defense leads to false economy and false security when it leaves the nation no alternatives to Communist or any other pressures except acquiescence (albeit with much verbal bluster) or the threat of all-out nuclear war. The limitations of our conventional military resources, and the corresponding reliance on nuclear weapons, contributed significantly, we think, to the simultaneous weakness and danger of Secretary Dulles' original position on the Quemoys.

On some points, of course, we are not in complete agreement with Mr. Murray. While we recognize the very real danger to national security of "limited" wars, and the inadequacy of our defense provisions to meet this kind of threat, we cannot dismiss so easily the danger of the "Big War." Mr. Murray feels that the possibility of all-out war need not much concern us, because it is obvious that neither we nor the Soviet Union could survive an all-out war. This conclusion necessitates too great a faith in the logicality of human action, we are afraid, and makes too little allowance for the error and perverseness of a fallen human nature. Insane as it might be, the nuclear holocaust is quite within the realm of human possibility.

We confess, too, an uneasiness with Mr. Murray's distinctions between "small" and "large" nuclear weapons. At what point does a nuclear bomb cease to be "small" and become "large"? And will the system of classification used by one of the combatants necessarily coincide with that used by the other? Further, can one really believe that in the wars of the future any power will refrain from using its "best" (worst?) weapons if it thinks—reasonably or not—that such weapons will save it from a serious defeat?

But these are arguable objections to a view of nuclear and military policy which is at least coherent and responsible, which makes some sense militarily and ethically. In any case, it is not Mr.

THE BISHOPS' CLOTHING COLLECTION

This year in parish churches throughout the land the 10th annual Catholic Bishops' Thanksgiving Clothing Collection takes place November 23 to 29. In the past nine years nearly a hundred million usable garments and pairs of shoes have been collected in American parishes and distributed to the needy in some fifty countries. Last year the largest consignments went to Poland, South Korea, Chile, and Italy, while such groups as flood victims in Korea, the destitude in Viet Nam and neglected inhabitants of St. Helena received emergency assistance (twenty-seven countries in all). Contributions of usable clothing should be brought to one's local parish church during Thanksgiving week this year to enable Catholic Relief Services to continune its overseas programs among the neediest and most neglected peoples.

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Murray's purpose merely to win adherents to his point of view. He is trying, as he has been trying for years, to put the facts of our nuclear program before the American people, to contribute to the formulation of sound and enlightened public opinion on the major problem of our time. His effort deserves the gratitude of all of us, and his ideas the consideration they have too long been denied.

DOCTOR ZHIVAGO AND LOLITA

THE RECEPTION accorded several recent books has reawakened, if ever they really slumbered, many questions concerning literature and morals, art and society, the critic and the reader. Harsh, crude distinctions have once again attempted to sever the complicated and subtle ties which bind moral and literary aspects of any particular work, to separate the "subject" of the work from the artistry which gives it form and value.

The controversies which center on *Doctor Zhivago* and *Lolita*—books which have in common little more than the ability to split their readers into partisan camps—are, of course, of different scope and importance. But each highlights the difficulty of the sensitive, conscientious critic who wishes to pass judgment on a novel as a literary work. The attempt to assess a book completely on literary terms alone is quixotic if, indeed, it is not entirely meaningless. When a critic asserts that he is making just such an attempt he is either deceiving himself or indulging in unreflective reaction to the critic who works to assess the novel wholly or primarily in political, moral, or social terms. Since the approach of each of these critics is partial it can result only in partial, and distorting, judgment.

And the temptations which are posed by *Doctor Zhivago* and *Lolita* are obvious. From the first one can—as many did—extract quotations which are harshly critical of the Communist regime. Each of these quotations can then be used as a little weapon to brandish in cold war propaganda; since the book is evidently a storehouse of such quotations it can be plundered at will. This, of course, has been the measure only of the non-critic. The more sophisticated see the work as one great weapon which Pasternak himself has wielded against Communism. This reaction may be closer to a real evaluation of the novel—but it has little to do with literary criticism. By now it must be clear to all that the best political sentiments do not necessarily, or even usually, make fine literature. The critical judgment must discern and evaluate the manner in which political thoughts help to shape and are shaped by the form of the novel. And this, of course, is how the most responsible critics have approached *Doctor Zhivago*. They have not failed to see the implications for both politics and art, but they have not attempted to make one do the work of the other.

Lolita has, quite obviously, offered temptations of its own. The subject matter—which involves the passion which a middle-aged psychopath has for a teen-age "nymphet"—is startling enough to draw attention not generally accorded to novels. And since the novel is more accessible to the general reader and critic than, say, *Ulysses*, it early clustered about it a host of judgments which shared little more than intensity and distance from each other.

The temptation to which many critics succumbed was to attempt to judge the book almost entirely on the basis of its "subject matter." Since the temptation was so great in the case of *Lolita* it is not surprising that many unfavorable judgments were made on just that basis. Other critics, responsive to Mr. Nabokov's undoubted literary ability, emphasized his real virtuosity and overlooked or chose not to dwell on the very real problems he posed himself by his donnée, his chosen subject.

But even those critics who attempted to make a truly critical judgment of the novel, those who realized that the subject matter was not to be judged apart from the form to which it contributed, did not arrive in one large body at some ideal opinion concerning the novel. And this, of course, was hardly to be expected. Articulated principles are helpful and sensitive discrimination is necessary to a sound critical judgment, but an infallible literary critic the world has yet to produce. Although precedents exist for fruitless literary Donnybrooks, it would be unfortunate if the controversy concerning either of these books led to personal argumentation rather than to a discussion of literary criticism and a reasoned defense of literary judgments.

RETURN OF JOHN COGLEY

OUR READERS, we feel sure, will be as pleased as we are to see John Cogley's "Here and There" back in our pages ["The New Pope," p. 228]. To his and our regret, a press of other affairs has kept Mr. Cogley from writing for more weeks than we like to recall. We now welcome him back, therefore, and hope that nothing will interfere with his regular appearance for a long time to come.

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Badlands of Free Enterprise

The economic cowboys of the housing industry swagger on with reckless bravado, shooting their way in and out of an endless series of desperate situations

by DENNIS CLARK

THE HOUSING industry is still the Wild West of the American economy. In no other industry are the economic ranges so wide, the gold-filled business peaks so high or the gulches of recession so steep and rugged. And the men in the greater portion of the private housing industry still act like the rough-jawed economic cowboys of yesteryear. They swagger on with reckless bravado, shooting their way in and out of an endless series of desperate situations. It is true that a great deal of the range has been fenced in by the government agencies, but the badlands are still bad and a home builder who is fast in the saddle of his bulldozer can cut out a herd of homes half a county wide before the sheriff even gets in sight.

As the members of the housing industry themselves see it, the bad guys in this scenario are the bureaucrats and the do-gooders who set up planning commissions in towns. The tenderfeet are the home buyers. Every so often there is a big range war, like the one conducted in and around Congress this year over the 1958 housing bill. The hired guns came from miles around and the air was hot with legislative gunsmoke.

There are reasons why the housing industry resembles a frontier roughriding spree. The industry itself must be huge to meet the demand for shelter, one of the three basic needs of life. The housing product is complex and is necessarily built across a wide physical area. The contractors and developers who make up the home building fraternity are legion, for the industry requires very low capitalization for the individual entrepreneur. There is a standard Chamber of Commerce luncheon joke that if you own one wheelbarrow you're a contractor, but if you have six bricks in the wheelbarrow you're a homebuilder.

In the housing industry not only does everybody want to get into the act, but they are in. There are at least a hundred and twenty thousand home builders with operations that vary in size from single unit building to mass production. The competition in the industry is keen and speed of operation is the factor on which profit depends. Speed is necessary in a business terrain where material prices, buyer preferences and mortgage conditions react swiftly to the tides of inflation and changes in government policy. These characteristics give the housing industry its Wild West aspects.

THE HOUSING industry is an extremely strategic segment of the American economy. Because it is highly volatile and responsive to changes in the economy as a whole, it has figured several times in pump-priming efforts. Last spring, for instance, housing starts rose after the federal government changed regulations to make mortgage money more available. The revival in housing activity paced the recovery of the economy from a recession that had sent a chill through thousands of political spines.

Housing legislation, however, was completely blocked in the last session of Congress. Industry spokesmen and those Congressmen with recession jitters wanted liberalized government mortgage policies to keep housing starts high. Administration officials and those determined Congressmen who have always opposed "socialist" escapades in the housing market swore no passage for any legislation that would increase federal spending by authorizing government purchase of mortgages at par value. And the partisans of public housing, hardened veterans of annual Congressional battles, chose 1958 to try to revamp the public housing program, which has grown from a New Deal rental program for the poor to a sprawling mid-century tangle of problem families, redevelopment puzzles and racial

Mr. Clark, of Philadelphia's Commission on Human Relations, writes frequently on urban problems.

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antagonism. These three factions dug in and gave no quarter. As the echoes of the session died away in the halls of Congress, the nation found that there was no housing enactment whatsoever.

The Congressional stand-off is symbolic of the blustering frustration that is inherent in the affairs of the housing industry as a whole. The industry has traditionally been decentralized, disorganized and, not infrequently, demoralized. Although homebuilding is an economic proving ground for free enterprise virtues and initiative, the field has had a stormy history of government intervention. Although the American people have made extraordinary strides in home ownership since the depression of the 1930's, the housing industry is continually berated as being deficient. And although the industry cycle is one of rapid expansion and contraction, reforms and innovations have been very slow to gain acceptance. These contradictions indicate the intricate nature of the industry's problems. Solutions to the ills of the house-producing business are, however, imperative. The economic and social significance of the housing industry is vast. The nation faces a population bulge in the 1960's that will severely test the ability of our economy to provide homes for the marriageable millions who were born in the baby boom during and after World War II.

Perhaps the primary problem of the housing industry is that of organization. The industry is not a rational construction like the automotive industry or the railroads. Its growth has been a story of economic miscellany and fitful adaptation. What structure there is within the homebuilding sphere is very much like a tribal one, and the sour relationships between the various elements in the industry are proverbial. Builders, contractors, material dealers, mortgage lenders, realtors, architects and appraisers outdo one another in fraternal strife. When labor organizations and government officials are added to the stew the conflicting interests are compounded. With such a congeries of groups it has not been possible to bring about any semblance of industry-wide structure. The existing trade and professional associations, now very loosely organized, frequently contradict one another in their lobbying operations and only occasionally undertake projects that are more than public relations side shows. In a field that is starving for research, for instance, the industry associations have done little to fill this need. Only recently, with the advent of the Luce publication *House and Home,* has the industry had a comprehensive trade publication to reflect the broad common ground among housing producers. It is significant that the point of view of labor and the public agencies is admitted to this publication, if at all, only when accompanied by thorough editorial spicing and spiking.

Without strong and mature organization to promote an orientation that would foster cooperation, the professional standards in the industry have tended to be anarchic, if not barbaric. There are vast loopholes in the vague "codes of ethics" buried in the files of real estate and home building associations, and a recollection of the scandals involving millions of dollars in illegal post-war windfall profits is a sobering reminder of the ethical malaise that infects a far from negligible proportion of the industry's practitioners. The satire of such books as John Keats' *The Crack In the Picture Window,* which lampoons the flimsy construction of suburban jerry-builders, is all too obviously merited. A high level of activity in an industry with weak organization, as is the case in the housing industry, presents large-scale opportunities for graft, shady profit and anti-consumer conniving.

THE LACK of adequate industry organization has prevented the development of any cogent training system to provide personnel for the industry. There are assorted courses in housing and related studies in various universities, but these have largely remained the province of architects and city planners. The working homebuilder has for the most part never taken such courses. He is a self-made man of the marketplace, whose knowledge of the industry and its problems is based on his own hit-and-miss experience in a very confusing business milieu. The architect, the professional planner and all such theorizers are largely considered as egghead interlopers by the men who have subdivided the nation's suburban landscape over the last twenty years.

This random training of personnel for work in a complex industry is doubly unfortunate. First, because the social role of residential building is most important, as is being increasingly recognized. The deficiencies of the builder of mediocre housing will thus come under growing fire, and only those builders with a clear vision of family and community needs and a high degree of competence will obtain public favor. Second, the housing industry is at the beginning of an extraordinary technical revolution. New materials, techniques and construction methods have been devised much more quickly than the industry can evaluate and absorb them. The skilled use of these innovations can only be promoted in a concerted fashion by men who have a high degree of technical knowledge and training. Although the real estate and appraisal fraternities have developed some courses in various subjects, there is no indication that education for the professional responsibilities of housing industry work is receiving any sort of thorough attention.

In addition to its organizational difficulties, the housing field has the problem of its own strange business cycle with which to deal. The business curve of the industry looks like a combination of rocket launchings

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and madcap ski-jumps. Housing is very sensitive to credit conditions and reacts violently to interest rate changes that would be shrugged off in other businesses. It must also be kept in mind that the Federal government has kept a wary eye on the industry as an economic bellwether. The Congress, the Treasury Department, the Federal Reserve Board and the President's economic advisers have intervened in the industry from time to time by altering monetary conditions to spur building activity. The industry is faced with the problem of being the subject and major instrument of intermittent government actions to foster economic recovery. However salutary this may be from the point of view of the economy as a whole, the expedients of government transfusions from time to time are no substitute for well controlled and stable private conduct of the industry.

Furthermore, it is a matter of conjecture whether housing can become a stable industry while the nation is prone to such historic crises as the Korean war and the military expenditures of the cold war. This may be one of the prices we pay for world leadership. The emergencies and diversions of national policy and the changing allocations of our credit resources must necessarily be reflected in a mercurial segment of our economy such as housing. We have placed great emphasis upon industrial capital expansion and our highway program, but we have been forced to make credit scarce for the housing industry in the process. Perhaps in addition to cold war events, our own energetic American drive to do many things at once is baffling us. Even in an "affluent society" there must be some balance of priorities.

BUT PROFESSIONAL organization and the vertigo of the business cycle are not all of the worries of the housing producers. The industry has a depressing array of time-honored blind spots. One is the stark fact of inadequate production. Quantitatively, the industry is not keeping pace with the booming population, nor is it replacing rapidly enough the proportion of the housing inventory that is slipping into obsolescence. According to our experts, we should be producing two million homes a year, but we are just about topping one million.

There is also the blind spot that results in the inability of the industry to serve certain special groups of the population. In most of the country Negroes and some of the other minorities are totally locked out of the new house market regardless of their ability to pay. The segregation system is more effective in housing than in any other area of our social life. Large families and low-income families have also been traditionally neglected in the market. Low-income families have been provided for to some extent with public housing—against bitter industry opposition—but if a family is large as well as poor even the government program gives it short shrift. These categories of families have been accorded notice in the housing market only as objects of exploitation.

Finally, there is the blind spot that has retarded industry participation in urban renewal. Here, however, the picture is brightening. Residential developers have begun to display interest in redevelopment and renewal opportunities. More and more private industry proposals are being submitted for rebuilding urban areas with federal assistance. This fledgling interest still seems puny in relation to the task, but it is a start.

If our cities are to be revived, the task of restoration will be primarily a residential one, and the housing industry must be the major force in the physical rebuilding of urban life. The social wellsprings of urban life are in the residential and domestic complex that the commercial and industrial enterprises were created to serve, and it is within such a complex that the most determining social and cultural processes take place. A new physical environment for urban residential life must be provided in a fresh and feasible form and on a large scale if the cities are to be reconstructed. The producers of housing cannot make their contribution by confining their interest in urban renewal to the construction of luxury apartments and gleaming office buildings, as has been the case in many cities during the past decade.

When the next session of Congress convenes, the spotlight will be speedily focused on the housing industry. A strong attempt will be made in the highest council of the nation to break the deadlock that has prevented the building of badly needed homes. In the background of the Congressional feuding will be the sight of the cities of the richest country in the world debilitating themselves in a simultaneous display of ill-planned expansion and rapid decay. The efforts of a horde of government officials, planners and eminent architects have been unable to control America's wasteful housing habits. Only the day-by-day members of the housing industry themselves can clear the way for catching up with the herculean task of sheltering a hundred and seventy-five million people.

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With increasing frequency,
the obvious question is being asked

After Franco, What?

by GEORGE DENNIS

SPECULATION concerning the succession to General Franco has long been common in Spain and in foreign newspapers. But when the *ABC* of Madrid, the Spanish capital's nearest approach to the New York *Times,* is permitted by the censors to refer to the time "when the Caudillo is no longer with us," it looks as though there may now be more than Spanish rumors and foreign speculations.

It is timely therefore to ask the two obvious questions: what kind of regime will succeed that of General Franco? and will the change be peaceful or violent?

The answer to these two questions depends on whether the change occurs in accordance with the expressed wish of the present ruler of Spain. If it does, the nineteen-year-old Prince Juan Carlos, son of the pretender Don Juan, will peacefully succeed to the throne that his grandfather, King Alfonso XIII, lost in 1931.

Monarchy has of late shown a surprising staying power in the modern world. After World War I many people, especially in Europe, thought that its day was over. But after World War II, it emerged stronger than ever in Britain, the Benelux countries and Scandinavia, to say nothing of such Asiatic countries as Japan.

But nothing in Spain is easy or simple, and monarchy conforms to the rule. Let us ignore, for the moment, the desperate question that a monarchist asked me in Spain: "How can we have a monarchy in Spain when we have no monarchists?" There still remain some serious doubts about the nature of the restored monarchy. To the average American, as to the average European, monarchy means a constitutional regime on the Anglo-Saxon or Scandinavian model. It also appears to have the same meaning to the pretender Don Juan, who has affirmed his belief in a "liberal" monarchy.

No such affirmation has been made by General Franco. He has instead referred either to "the monarchy of July 18" or "the monarchy of the Catholic kings." July 18 is the date of rising against the Republic and when the General refers to it, he means that the restored monarchy would be inspired not by democratic liberalism but by fascist Falangism, which provided the rising with its ideological content. As for the Catholic rulers Ferdinand and Isabella, they are invoked to give the monarchy a traditional Spanish basis. There is no doubt that the General sincerely believes this, even if his opponents mutter darkly that a monarchy restored by him would be less concerned with the restoration of fifteenth century political ideas than with the preservation of twentieth century vested interests. And there is yet another conception of monarchy in Spain, the Carlist, whose adherents believe in a popular monarchy such as existed in Spain *before* Ferdinand and Isabella spoiled it with their newfangled innovations.

IF PRINCE Juan Carlos were to become King Juan Carlos tomorrow by the fiat of General Franco he could count on the support of the forces that have kept the Caudillo in power for the last twenty years: elements of the armed forces, the police, the Church, and the economic and political vested interests concerned with avoiding a violent change. He could also rely on the admittedly slender numbers of Spaniards who are monarchists by genuine conviction. Finally, there would be considerable groups of people who, while anti-monarchists at heart, would welcome his coming as a relief from the rigors of the Caudillo's rule. As a Republican leader put it to me in Madrid: "If Franco is replaced by a king, we would keep our mouths shut at first—out of sheer gratitude. But we would not keep them shut for very long." This is also, roughly, the position of men like Dionisio Ridruejo, the Falangist leader opposed to Franco who started the Social Party of Democratic Action.

The new king would have to contend with the undisguised hostility of the kind of Spaniard who overthrew the monarchy in the 1930's and defended the Republic in three years of civil war. (Incidentally, while this includes all kinds of liberals, moderates and socialists, it does not include the Communists, who are advocating at present a "national front" of all forces opposed to General Franco, including the monarchists.) Then there are the Falangists who regard the restoration of the monarchy as a betrayal of everything that the party and its martyred leader José Antonio Primo de Rivera

George Dennis is the pseudonym of a journalist now in this country after a lengthy stay in Spain.

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stand for. Last are the Carlists, whose pretender, Prince Xavier, is said to have signed a document abdicating his claims.

Under these circumstances, much would depend on the personality of the new king. Juan Carlos has certain undeniable assets. He is young and not burdened with any personal record. He is also a very handsome young man ("The only real monarchists in Spain are the bobbysoxers in love with Juan Carlos," the same despairing monarchist told me). He is a good son and a person of unblemished moral character: there is no spiteful gossip about him and this, in a country like Spain, is surely conclusive. But he has so far not shown the slightest awareness of the responsibilities involved in mounting the throne or of the serious problems he would have to face. Instead he has exhibited an immaturity almost incredible in a nineteen-year-old Spaniard.

If the change of government happens without the Caudillo's consent, then the field is wide open for a monarchy of any variety, a republic, a military dictatorship by another general, a Falangist fascist state, a Communist Soviet or anything else that Spaniards might think of. It is all pure speculation.

This is not quite true of the possibilities of violence. If the dictatorship of General Franco yields its place to the monarchy of King Juan Carlos, the changeover is likely to be smooth, because the substance of power would remain in the same hands and the machinery of repression would not cease functioning. If General Franco is displaced rather than replaced, a civil war is unlikely, at least in the immediate future. Spanish civil wars have invariably occurred not immediately upon the fall of a strong regime but several years after. Such a delay would certainly be required after a regime like the present one, whose police have pulverized and atomized all organized opposition.

BUT IF A civil war is unlikely, certain kinds of violence are all but inevitable, given the Spanish temperament and the accumulated hatreds and resentments of twenty years. Some targets of that violence are clearly visible even now.

In addition to personal grudges, there are individuals who have earned themselves the hatred of their fellow-Spaniards in various ways. Some did it by flaunting their ill-gotten fortunes in the faces of their starving countrymen. Of such is Manuel de Arburua, former Minister of Foreign Trade, whose name has become a symbol of shameless corruption. There are also the professional torturers in the secret police.

It is also more than likely that a violent change of regime would manifest itself in "incidents" directed against Americans. There have been few such "incidents" so far and they have been easily settled. American military and civilian personnel stationed in Spain have behaved with the utmost correctness. Nonetheless their presence in Spain is widely resented as a main support of the regime. The Republican government in exile has repudiated Spanish treaties with the United States and popular feeling against the U.S. will surface once the official repression is gone.

Finally there is the Church. Here, too, the civil war has failed to achieve a lasting settlement. It restored the Church to a position as advantageous, if not more so, than that which it held before the coming of the Republic. But this has not abolished the resentment that cost the lives of some 11,000 priests in the thirties. The resentment merely smolders under the surface, and it is all but impossible to have a serious conversation with a Spanish priest without encountering his fear of what would happen "the next time," i.e., when the regime collapses. Nor are these fears confined to believing Catholics. People opposed to Franco who are by no means believers expressed to me their horror of the coming **holocaust.**

BUT IS such a holocaust inevitable? Must a serious change in Spain result in unchaining violence—a violence, incidentally, which would ensure that the change would be ephemeral? Only five years ago the answer to such questions would be a despairing "yes." But there have been signs since then that Spaniards are undergoing a true change of heart.

They are beginning to understand at last why the civil war broke out, why it cost a million lives and why the victory was yet inconclusive. They realize that the war that started in 1936 and continues in Spanish hearts till now is merely the last episode of a war between two Spains, the "traditional" and the "progressive," that started many years ago, when "progressive" Spain was born in the wake of the French Revolution.

A new note was sounded five years ago by José Luis Aranguren, a Catholic layman, calling upon his exiled countrymen from Madrid to start a "dialogue" across the frontiers and the hatreds dividing them. The response to his call has been heartening. It came from Spaniards of all creeds and of all parties, wishing not only to bury the hatchet of the civil war but make its recurrence impossible. The official organ of the Spanish Church, *Ecclesia,* asked in an editorial that the Monument to the Fallen of the War be dedicated to "all the dead," i.e., the dead of both sides. It echoed the cry of a Republican poet exiled in Mexico, Juan de Monegros, who wrote in "To the Body of a Dead Carlist": "The blood that you shed hurts in my veins."

These new forces of national reconciliation and understanding are still young; but it is in them that the hope of the future lies. Only a government that represents them can heal the wounds of one hundred fifty years. Its constitutional form, monarchy or republic, would be largely irrelevant.

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THE NEW POPE

AFTER THE genuine mourning for the great Pius XII his successor came on the world-scene like a new sunburst. A whole generation had come to identify the papacy with the lean, ascetic, patrician figure of Pope Pius. His successor immediately provided a study in contrast. John XXIII, like the Pope he followed, is a seasoned, sophisticated diplomat, but he also brings to the exalted office a geniality and warmth that immediately won the world's affection.

It was spontaneous and wholehearted. I think the impatience with extravagant formalities that he showed right away had something to do with it. His instructions to the editors of *L'Osservatore* that they should eliminate phrases like "according to an utterance from the august lips of the sublime Pontiff" and substitute something like "the Holy Father said," suggested a certain common-sense approach to reality which millions found reassuring. Again, he laughingly told a group of newsmen that if they heard him using the first person singular it was because he was not yet used to calling himself "we," for after all it took time to get used to being a universal father. That was sheer winsomeness. And the world was so utterly delighted with the peasant dignity and pride of the Roncalli family that his closeness to them through the years spoke volumes about the simplicity and genuineness of the man.

The face of Pope Pius XII was a mirror of his internal tranquillity. Quite simply, he was a beautiful man. The new Holy Father looks like his peasant brothers, but there is nothing incongruous or disappointing about his plain features and solid bulk. The recent portrait of him on *Life's* cover suggests warmth, an enormous tolerance and the kind of playful sense of proportion which has shown up in almost everything he has said and done.

These very qualities, I think, are exactly the ones needed in the world today. People everywhere are seeking for some symbol of them—the love that comes spontaneously, the habitual capacity to distinguish between the sinner and the sin or the good man and the bad idea, and, finally, a sense of humor.

Catholics, dealing with the Popes, have always been able to distinguish between the man and the office. Happily, for a long time now the Church has been led by good men, not a few of whom were saints. But the faith of the Catholic is not particularly disturbed when he learns that over the long centuries a few scoundrels have occupied the Chair of Peter. It reassures him in his belief that the life of the Church is not dependent on the spiritual state of any one man. The papacy is not—nor do I think it should ever become—a mere personality cult. Yet today, in this age of mass communications, the personality of the Pope, for better or worse, is important.

He occupies the center of the world's stage. The impression people get of him greatly colors their approach to what he says. In his person he stands before all men as the representative of the oldest Christian body, the one truly supra-national figure among the leaders of the world. His words are spread across the newspapers. His photograph appears so constantly in the press that his features become as familiar as the faces of one's own family. Millions traveling to Rome catch personal glimpses of him. Thousands upon thousands meet him personally. Willy-nilly, by all these means, the general public forms an image of the man who is Pope and associates the Church with the qualities he embodies.

By the force of his personality Pius XII created the sublime image of a man of profound spirituality, a religious leader utterly devoted to peace on earth—a man of extraordinary intellectual gifts capable of meeting the contemporary philosophical attacks on the Christian religion with authority and wisdom.

Pope John XXIII, in his own way, promises to incarnate the Church's answer to the totalitarian attack not so much on Christian philosophy as the attack on man himself. For those traits of the new Pope that so quickly won worldwide response are the qualities of Christian humanism. And they are the qualities which are lamentably absent in the Brave New World which the totalitarians are forcing into being. I speak of gentleness, compassion, geniality, the ready acceptance of life, the sense of humor, patience with man's frailty, the awareness of man's dignity.

As Cardinal Roncalli, the present Pope was available to all who came to him. He could not turn anyone away, he often said, because if he did so he might be turning away some poor sinner who wanted to make a confession. That simple statement was probably the most anti-totalitarian utterance of the year.

It is much too early to make any judgment about the pontificate of John XXIII. But it is not too soon to find the words to describe him. Pius XII will go down in history as the Pope of Peace. I hope that in his turn John XXIII will be known as the Pope of Humanity. Pius worked for peace in an age of war. John, by his very person and the sheer force of his personality, will defend the idea of man in an age so afflicted with the totalitarian temper that even anti-totalitarians can often forget that *joie de vivre* is a birthright that belongs to the children of God.

JOHN COGLEY.

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A group of Protestant pastors are creating a stir in the entire theological world

Reformation in Germany, 1958

by ADOLPH SCHALK

THE REFORMATION is not something that happened once for all, but is still going on and will not stop until both sides, Protestant and Catholic, find each other.

This is but one of the many provocative viewpoints of a group of Protestant (Evangelical) German pastors who are creating a stir in Germany and, indeed, around the entire theological world. It is no exaggeration to say that they have started something which may prove to have repercussions far more profound than the Oxford movement of England, which this development strikingly resembles.

The group calls itself *Die Sammlung* (The Gathering) from the words of Christ, "He who does not gather with me, scatters." (Matthew: xii, 30.) The controversy which The Gathering has provoked became especially lively with the publication early this year of the jointly-written book *Catholic Reformation*. This book was published by the Catholic Schwaben Verlag in Stuttgart, which is also noted for having introduced such avant-garde Catholic writers as Jean Daniélou and Yves Congar to the German public.

"We are of the belief," the book says in one place, "that in our days the swaying figure of the Church is due to her disunion. . . . The Apostle says that the Church is the pedestal and foundation of the truth. Can we say that about our Church too? Must not something be unhealthy at the heart if the Church turns into a swaying figure?"

In another place, the writers say, "Our disbelief shows that we are completely content if our church—which calls itself reformative—is not even in harmony with the church of the Lutheran Reformation. Can you really justify the fact that the good endeavors for the full divine service of the Lutheran Mass, for the central position of the holy sacraments and of confession meet with so much resistance? . . . Must it not be the ambition of all good-willed to return first of all remorsefully to our starting point?" It is charged further by the members of The Gathering "that we act as if our church had only been founded in 1517. Are we really ready to give up the great values of the pre-Reformation Church this cheaply? . . . Do we actually still face the fact that St. Boniface christianized Germany and that our way to the apostles cannot bypass him nor the other Catholic missionaries?"

Based on seven circular letters which they sent to many Protestant ministers in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, the book asks Protestants to face the claim of the Bishop of Rome to be the successor of St. Peter, who is "The Rock." Response to the letters (which were sent over a four-year period) has been considerable. Some twelve hundred Protestants have rallied behind The Gathering and an additional three hundred Catholics assist the group continually with their prayers, their love and their unremitting appeal for understanding in their own ranks.

THE AUTHORS of the book and leaders of the group are Dr. Hans Asmussen, former Cathedral Provost of Kiel, now living in Heidelberg; Pastor Richard Baumann of Tübingen; Pastor Ernst Fincke of Frankfurt; Pastor Max Lackmann of Soest and Pastor Wolfgang Lehmann of Offenbach. In addition, a layman, Gustav Huhn, who leads an adult education institution and youth center, has been admitted as one of the leaders and has also contributed to the book. Most of these men were active in the resistance movement during the Hitler regime. (Lackmann was imprisoned in the concentration camp at Dachau from the fall of 1942 until April 1945; Asmussen recently received the Order of Merit from Professor Theodor Heuss, President of the Federal Republic, for his leadership in the resistance.)

The Gathering is officially described as a union of Evangelical men and women, lay and clergy, who have heard God's call to rise up and overcome the problem of a divided Christianity. They wish to work and to pray that the churches of the Reformation find the "necessary" place in the One, Catholic and Apostolic Church, not only for their own fulfillment but also for the future of the entire Church of God.

The members of The Gathering are convinced that they must face the fact that "the teachings of the Reformation—and thereby the existence of our Church—are burdened by misjudgments on both sides. . . .

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That therefore we must reach a mutual acknowledgement and we must establish a new relationship with the pre-Reformation Roman Catholic Church, that we owe it to the healing of the entire church to come to such an acknowledgement. Only to the extent to which we take the question of truth thus seriously can we hope to overcome the differences between confessions as well as within Evangelicism."

In the book *Catholic Reformation,* Dr. Asmussen says, "The Catholic question is the pre-eminent question of this generation, for we come from the Catholic Church and only with her can we find our fullness; we cannot do without her." And every year in spring and fall The Gathering presents a conference of several days for friends and guests in which controversial questions of faith are thoroughly gone over. Prayers and, to a limited extent, religious services (e.g., Compline) are offered in common, though of course Masses (Lutheran and Catholic) are offered separately. There are also talks by Catholic and Evangelical theologians on such topics as "Confession," "Mary," "Church and State." The discussions are attended by overflowing crowds. Recently Dr. Asmussen and Father Thomas Sartory, O.S.B., spoke on "The Unity of the Church." Not too long ago the distinguished Catholic theologian Prälat (Monsignor) Robert Grosche of Cologne, along with Dr. Asmussen, spoke on a joint radio program over the West German Radio station (WDR) on the topic: "Do we need a Pope?"

I VISITED with one of the group, Pastor Lackmann, recently at his home in Soest. During dinner and afterwards until past midnight in his study he told me about the movement's aims, how it got started and what it has accomplished. At the table he blessed himself and told me that this custom has been adopted and encouraged by a number of Protestant ministers. I saw a crucifix on the wall of his study and *prie-dieu* underneath it. I also paged through a beautifully-designed and printed Lutheran missal in the vernacular.

A tall, slender, energetic man of forty-seven, Pastor Lackmann told me that around 1945 the members of The Gathering became aware of one another through writings in various periodicals. Each noted that the other raised the same questions. Correspondence then led to meetings in person.

"We asked ourselves," he said, "whether the Kirchenkampf (Protestant Resistance Movement) was all in vain. More and more parishioners missed a real leadership, sacramental fulfillment. And we asked ourselves: 'Can this church be from God—with so much relativity and no absolute truth?' "

"Externally," he said, "we noticed too that there was something amiss about the Protestant Church's attitude toward the world, especially in the fields of politics and education. It became apparent to us that it was actually the Roman Catholic Church which had preserved the purity of many more Lutheran things than the Lutheran Church did, for example the sacraments and confessions."

He continued, "We can only truly find ourselves, even historically, by re-discovering our communion with the Catholic Church. It is a scandal—the separation of the confessions—which is not only against the will of Christ, but a scandal for all unbelievers and an aid for the unchristian masses inundating us. If we want to believe in Christ we must unite."

Pastor Lackmann pointed out that The Gathering has no direct connection with the work of *Una Sancta,* which is also a German movement devoted to ultimate reunion of Catholicism and Protestantism. Although the *Una Sancta* movement does not aim at conversions, the fact that it is promoted predominantly by Catholics gives the impression that it seeks converts.

The Gathering, on the other hand, in spite of its many "Catholic" convictions, by no means wishes to convert to Catholicism. Pastor Lackmann emphatically stated that conversion is not the solution. The Gathering believes that the entire theological problem must be rethought and that both sides must first get to know each other. Pastor Lackmann declares, "We must start thinking how we can serve each other."

IF UNITY comes, The Gathering believes, it will not come as an "unconditional surrender." "This is impossible," says Lackmann, "but rather it may come about in such a way that the Evangelical Church will return as a body for itself within the Catholic Church. Too many Catholic theologians think that it is all a very easy matter. They say all Protestants must simply become Catholics. But in this way nothing will be learned. We are not conversion-conscious; we still regard our confession seriously. The times are past when we can think merely of converting. Unfortunately leading churchmen don't see that; they are too isolated, in many cases not even orientated, unaware of what is going on."

Pastor Lackmann says, "We believe we have a historical function to perform, but we do not think we would be serving Catholicism to be swallowed up by it. If unity comes it will come not by dissolving the Lutheran Church but by transforming it. We are Lutherans, we feel that God has blessed us as Lutherans, we want to serve as Lutherans. The Reformation regarded a minister as a servant of the Catholic Church. We think that we can learn from one another and that Catholicism can learn from us as well as we can learn from it."

What has been the Catholic reaction to The Gathering? At first its reaction in Germany was very positive. The Gathering was regarded as a sensational movement and the group on its part has taken great pains to

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keep Catholic leaders informed of its work. "We visited Rome individually and privately several times and spoke with leading clergymen. We never entered into any direct negotiations, but we did our best to inform them about us and to be informed about Rome. The Holy Father too knows about our work." (On May 1 of this year The Gathering decided on a "hands-off" policy in regard to official negotiations or dealings with the Roman Catholic Church. This, they maintain, is solely a matter for the church heads of both sides to decide.) "After a while," I was told, "negative reactions set in. Some Catholic theologians regard The Gathering as dangerous because they feel it suggests modification of Catholic dogma."

The reaction on the Protestant side has been on the whole negative. In spite of The Gathering's support from a number of clergymen, Protestant authorities have systematically tried to wipe it out of existence. For over a year it has been under public attack, and the famed Pastor Niemöller, once a close friend of Asmussen, has become the anti-Rome spokesman and tends to regard The Gathering as betrayers of the Lutheran cause. On the positive side, however, Lackmann pointed out that "there are also Lutheran church leaders who recommend bona fide theological disputations with The Gathering, its writings and its aim, but in a friendly and brotherly manner." And the Conference of Lutheran Bishops in Germany recently took up The Gathering's writings for special consideration and one has the impression that they are beginning to take the group seriously.

Pastor Lackmann's present parish, the Church of the Twelve Apostles (the name seems to him symbolic as it represents the total Church, not just a Pauline Church) is a kind of dead-end street for him, a humiliating post for a man with his distinguished background. Located in the tiny resort village of Körbecke, ten miles from Lackmann's drab apartment in Soest, it serves five hundred souls, mostly refugees. He has told his parishioners nothing of The Gathering's work. "It would be too confusing. Besides, the theological questions I represent are put to the entire Church and the entire Church as such must answer." But he does try to exercise as many of his convictions as the Lutheran Church at present allows. On the day that I was present as an observer, the Lutheran Mass was offered with about as beautiful a participation in the vernacular as I have ever seen, including a very moving recitation of the creed and distribution of communion. (Lutherans believe in the real presence of Christ.)

Pastor Lackmann may be transferred at any time. "But," he says, "there is really nowhere else to go." He has made no plans for the future. "We will serve the Lutheran Church as long as she lets us and hope that something good will happen for the entire Catholic Church."

THE SCREEN

NO VINE-COVERED COTTAGES

BECAUSE ITS distressing story is told entirely from the woman's point of view, "Home Before Dark" may be classed as a woman's picture; but it certainly deserves more than derogatory pigeonholing. It has some stunning black-and-white photography of the college town (called Cape Marble, Mass.) where most of the action takes place. And it has a fine cast under the direction of Mervyn LeRoy, who has skillfully guided Jean Simmons in the finest performance of her career.

This is no small achievement, considering that Miss Simmons has given many memorable portrayals in films like "Great Expectations," "Black Narcissus" and "Hamlet." In "Home Before Dark," she appears in practically every scene and runs the gamut—as Charlotte, a wife shyly longing for the love of her college-professor husband, feeling the effects of returning from a mental institution, rebelling against the interest of gossipy neighbors and a bossy stepmother, fighting jealousy of her beautiful stepsister and welcoming the friendship of the boarder who moved in while she was away.

Jean Simmons excels in portraying the emotions of this many-sided woman who can be both reflective and stormy, who sometimes suspects her husband of doping her food, who tries to assume her snappy stepsister's personality, and who, finally secure in her sanity, tells off her self-centered family. Unfortunately, the strength of Miss Simmons's good and varied performance exposes the picture's weakness: the other characters are thin and one-dimensional beside her. Eileen and Robert Bassing, who wrote the script from Mrs. Bassing's novel, concentrated their efforts on the character of Charlotte and neglected to explore the motivations of the people around the main character. Furthermore, at times the script sounds as if it were mainly concerned with building up an argument in favor of divorce and remarriage.

The actors, however, do extremely well with what they are given, especially Dan O'Herlihy as Charlotte's cold, stuffy husband; Rhonda Fleming as Charlotte's extremely pretty, feather-brained stepsister, whom Charlotte has always envied; Mabel Albertson as the stepmother who wants to manage everyone and everything; Efrem Zimbalist, Jr., as the Jewish boarder who soon senses something's wrong in this house and in the college too; Steve Dunne as a former beau of Charlotte's who turns up to remind Charlotte that she would have been happier if she'd married him. Although the film never delves deeply into Charlotte's psychological problems or those that motivate the other

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characters, "Home Before Dark" carries a certain conviction—thanks to LeRoy's direction and the good acting. If it were properly edited, it could easily slip out of the "woman's picture" category.

ANOTHER new picture that has to do with a confused domestic scene is "The Tunnel of Love," a comedy concentrating on the loose morals of people living in and around Westport, Connecticut. The story concerns a couple (played with indifferent charm by Doris Day and Richard Widmark) who have been married five years but have no child. So they hope to get one from Rock-a-Bye Adoption Agency. When the investigator (Gia Scala) calls, Richard is home alone and he makes a most unfavorable impression that is made even worse when Gig Young, as a neighbor who has a wife and three children, drops in and tries to date the investigator. But it is Richard who dates Gia; and sometime later when Rock-a-Bye does give Doris and Richard a baby, Richard thinks the child is really his. And Doris is suspicious.

The best of Peter De Vries' novel, from which this thin plot stems by way of the stage play, were the hilarious puns. Since these are missing, there isn't much left. Gene Kelly, who directed the picture but doesn't appear in it, works valiantly but fruitlessly to make something funny out of a series of rather tasteless situations. "The Tunnel of Love" wins some laughs, but the whole thing is little more than an old-fashioned bedroom farce.

MUCH FUNNIER is "Houseboat," in which Cary Grant plays a widower who had been separated from his wife for years, and then after her death suddenly finds himself in charge of his three little kids. Director Mel Shavelson (who also wrote the script with Producer Jack Rose) makes the most of the situation involving three youngsters who are bored with Washington, which they find full of monuments and dead people, and ill at ease with their father. Sophia Loren is in Washington too, as a visitor from Italy who's also having father trouble; naturally, when Cary sees how adept she is with his children, he hires her at once as housekeeper and maid on their houseboat on the Potomac. As Cary puts it: "You're hardly my idea of a faithful old retainer, but you've got to stay." The only question is how long will it be before Sophia and Cary fall in love. For a while it looks as if this inevitable conclusion will be prevented by Martha Hyer, who has a yen for Cary, and by Harry Guardino, who's extremely funny as an Italian-American interested in Sophia but not in marriage. It may take this "Houseboat" too long to get where it's going, but the trip is very amusing, and the passengers, young and old, are pleasant company.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

THE STAGE

THE VOICE OF THIS CALLING

THOUGH it will have closed within the month, the Phoenix production of "The Family Reunion" has yet been the occasion of raising the venture on Second Avenue to first status in our theater of serious intent. To Messrs. Hambleton and Houghton, who have openly admitted the gravity of the financial crisis this season at the Phoenix, this will of course come as an idle consolation—and let anyone who failed to support this production have the future grace to shut his mouth about theatrical poverty in New York. Still, it is much to have made available on a major American stage, initially and with distinguished powers of sympathy, the most audacious work of Mr. T. S. Eliot's theater; much to have given voice to impulses of such spiritual diversity, relevance and domination; not least of all, much to have restored to a famished public some fertile patch in the soil of pleasure. So it is that this event of "The Family Reunion" has been not only the most impressive experience of the season, but the most entertaining; to go from it to the Broadway showshops, with their relentless manipulation of automatic response, is to have a new lesson in human vacancy.

At the Phoenix, excellence begins with Mr. Norris Houghton's setting, a classical shell, with something in its aspect of Palladian elegance, the whole open to the free movement of the players, a choice of theatrical stylization at once physically fluent and, in the imaginative sense, profoundly right for this play with its imagery of passage and journey, of the footfall in the corridor, of the maze and the secret gate to the rose garden. Lingering silhouettes of light, and Mr. David Amram's reedy music, carry into a final sensuous reality that numinous stir and reaching which is the rhythm of "The Family Reunion." It is but rarely that we are gifted with a theatrical design of such poetic austerity, yet capable, when the scene demands, of dilating into a fine, tangible solidity. Mr. Houghton and his associates have conceived a production of just such resistant flexibility and it is a triumph of the pictorial imagination, a liquid translation into the theater art of Mr. Eliot's ambiance of Christian vocation and atonement, Greek reconciliation, and prime secular knowledge of the bent world.

Mr. Stuart Vaughan, an expressive talent among the rising directors, has molded a performance of brilliant moderation. Though he has broken with Mr. Eliot's explicit direction that the Furies be kept invisible, his imaging of them as a flow of ceaseless, reddened eyes is, in the main, plausible, a decent phenomenon. What Mr. Vaughan has done in the

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distribution of metrical stress and order, particularly in the choral passages, is irreproachable. These last lose all distracting exoticism, and emerge simply as a convention by which the common thought is turned upon the private happening. He has kept this whole of "The Family Reunion" alive with an animation of scene and soul gravely constant, with patterns of movement and vocal inflection neither complacent nor driven.

Mr. Vaughan's distinction is not less evident in the harmony to which he has modulated the diverse styles of his players. The "flat" choral figures are given their due gradation of comic light and scorn. Miss Florence Reed brings to the role of Amy, Dowager Lady Monchesney, "her accustomed fire and sword," as Mr. Stark Young once called it, "that air of an Olympian hour of ladling it out and letting you have it—come and get your cup of thunder." Miss Reed may invoke at will an almost automatic command of tragic echo, and the exhibition is, shall we say, *formidable*. Patience and a deeper search might discover in the character that pathetic coloring of errant human will Mr. Eliot now feels it to have, and so give the motif a more complex tenderness, but no matter: it is the happy faculty of Miss Reed's generation to be able to act roles it does not understand, and this Lady Monchesney never fails of effect.

I found too Miss Lillian Gish's performance of an elusive and provocative interest. This personage of Agatha, like that of all the suburban Pallas Athenas to which Mr. Eliot is addicted, has as character not so much idiosyncrasy or will as function: sibylline, priestly or therapeutic. She is a traveler in the way of illumination, yet the theater problem is to endow such figures with a certain carrying conviction. Miss Gish, whose playing has behind it always a fine culture of spirit, seeks in the role security of outline, poise and a general verity of psychological good sense. If this refusal of an obvious and intimidating mystique softens the passages of runic, liturgical atmosphere, it is nonetheless an impulse to which I do not doubt Mr. Eliot would respond. I can imagine the character in another reading, of more thrill and emotional solicitation, but equally at the loss of delicate realities Miss Gish has contrived for it.

Mr. Fritz Weaver has regained that mobility of anguish which deserted him at the Stratford "Hamlet" last summer, and his performance as Harry, Lord Monchesney, has no little conviction. Ironically, his very youth works against him: this, as well as a defect of elegance and solitary pressure. All of these need more palpably be evoked, since Harry is the dramatization less of an action than a quality, the amplification of a state of mind rather than a character. Lord Monchesney is the romantic hero spiritually conceived, and Mr. Weaver has no profound grace of ardor or lyric reverberation; to his beautiful instrumentality of voice and presence, he adds rather a daylight talent, mental, shrewd, passionate with knowledge, virile and witty, quick, malicious even, and wilful. As it is, he arouses in "The Family Reunion" considerable stir, and his wiry asperity marks a distinction of the play one had forgotten: its mordant portrait and dissection, down to the last banality, guilt and discreet tyranny, of that necessary neurosis which is the family.

I have dwelt at such length on this production of "The Family Reunion" because I wished to record gratitude for a distinguished enterprise in our theater, but not least because Mr. T. S. Eliot's play seems to me a permanent part of the history of imagination in this time and so, as it were, invulnerable to transient comment; before it, we are all simply students. I realize that many persons, perhaps most, are hostile to this posture and its implications, but as it seems to me the ultimate posture before all valuable life, in art or what you will, I must let the prejudice stand. So I have read attentively examinations of "The Family Reunion" by Mr. Raymond Williams, by Miss Helen Gardner and Mr. T. R. Henn, by Mr. Matthiessen, by Mr. Ronald Peacock and Miss Bodkin and Mr. Eliot himself, and I rest in the grateful pleasure of complex though indeterminate light. Of the lot, Mr. Eliot's essay on "Poetry and Drama" remains an indispensable first statement of the maker. Mr. Henn dissents tellingly, and Miss Gardner illustrates the last flowering in *Four Quartets* of that experience of revelation which the play only explores. Finally, Mr. Ronald Peacock's *The Poet in the Theater* is the most satisfactory analysis of the whole divided context of culture and society against which the labors of Mr. Eliot's early pieces for the theater must be seen.

To this distinguished clamor of opinion, I should wish to add two notes. When Mr. Eliot marks as the chief defect of "The Family Reunion" its "failure of adjustment between the Greek myth and the modern situation," he puts, I must think, too fine a point upon it. The ritual of social fear, which is the terror of "The Family Reunion," and the ritual of personal atonement, which is its pity, make a tragic rhythm, however elusive. One should not see Mr. Eliot's invocation of the Aeschylus substance, and his refusal to give the structure of his statement a specifically Christian character, as mere idle academicisms, precious or sly: they are rather the gallant effort of imagination to unite all life in continuity of spirit, an impulse natural to Mr. Eliot's mind of racial conception and order, and one of the few searching labors after wholeness our splintered time has known. Nor will I admit the themes and pressures of Mr. Eliot's theater to be alien to anyone not in the last extremity of spiritual atrophy. It is true, as Mr. Peacock observes, that the aspect of universal tragedy which "The

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Family Reunion" embodies—the Christian form of sin and expiation—is an expression of the tragic implications of life in a most *generalized* form; yet this is a necessity imposed on Mr. Eliot by the condition of his society, its radical dissolution and uncontrollable variety. It is a consequence of confusion about the nature of what being it is desirable to elect.

From this flows the unique character of "The Family Reunion" as a drama of vocation, of destiny and election. If this motif dominates the whole of Mr. Eliot's theater—with its multiple searches after tradition, ways of life and ultimate verity of being—it has here its most explicit rendering. What Cardinal Newman saw as a Crookedness at the root of the world—the temptations of "Murder in the Cathedral," the illusions of intimacy and wish in "The Cocktail Party" and "The Confidential Clerk"—is torment of sheer human possibility in "The Family Reunion," the solicitation of the unrealized selves. It is beyond the scope of this note to speculate (in Mr. Eliot's own words) on what "rude unknown psychic material . . . directs the poet to tell this particular story, to develop this particular situation," yet one certitude emerges: that he has taken the fury of his time, that he is a classicist not through meagerness, but through abundance. It is essential to affirm the *passionate* reality of the life expressed through Mr. Eliot's theater, at a moment when both passion and realism have lost all validity as either concept or experience. RICHARD HAYES.

COMMUNICATIONS

"LOLITA"

Washington, D. C.

TO THE EDITORS: I am writing to protest the extravagantly laudatory review by Mr. Thomas Molnar of Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita,* [October 24]. This is, I believe, only the second time in more than ten years that I have bothered a busy editor with such protest, and I write with the more diffidence because I feel that it is a particularly risky thing for one professional book reviewer to criticize another adversely. I recognize also that a priest-reviewer is often discounted when he discusses the moral aspects of a novel, or when he criticizes another's review of a book that poses grave moral problems.

Although I have often differed in book reviewing matters with Father Harold Gardiner, S.J., the literary editor of *America,* I would quite willingly make my own his words in the August 30th issue of that journal, to the effect that "this book is, without the slightest doubt in my mind, the most obscene lucubration to disgrace U.S. publishing in many a decade." Father Gardiner speaks further of "the evasions, subterfuges, and plain double-talk to which a good number of critics have resorted to whitewash this decadent book." I would accept these words as covering such judgments of Mr. Molnar as these:

"Yet both [Lolita] and Humbert, her mother and friends, the many people we pass by in the lust- and anguish-driven car, form a fantastic, wonderful cavalcade of humanity, described, analyzed, judged with incomparable virtuosity . . . this book has a high literary value; it has much more: a style, an individuality, a brilliance which may yet create a tradition in American letters."

Or these:

"Mr. Nabokov's writing has the rare quality of dominating the reader, body and mind, his curiosity and fears, his capacity for pity, amusement, tears and laughter."

About his ability to dominate the curiosity of a certain type of reader, I have no doubt; the rest is highly debatable. Mr. Molnar further speaks of the book's leaving the reader "amidst a thousand delights"; about this, positing a certain type of reader and a certain kind of dubious delight, I am willing to agree.

I have a theory about *Lolita* and its success which is probably depressingly *simpliste,* and it is this: that with the wide acceptance in novelistic circles of the Kinsey report and in the light of the kind of writing that followed immediately on many once-taboo themes of illicit love and perversion, a certain type of writer was hard-pressed to find a new formula that would titillate in a really original manner. The little girl/middle-aged man combination rather neatly fills the bill, and Mr. Molnar is probably right in saying that the foundation has been laid for a *Lolita* tradition, and a good many modern reviewers are trying hard to help it along. Only a few months have elapsed since many prominent reviewers and even serious critics made collective fools of themselves over *By Love Possessed,* and there is a depressing sameness about their reactions to *Lolita,* though I would admit that as a stylist and word-trickster Mr. Nabokov far surpasses Cozzens.

I would further suggest that the carrying of such a review by The Commonweal may well have two unfortunate consequences: 1. Those Catholics who criticize The Commonweal for being "too liberal" or an example of the dangers of lay Catholic journalism will have additional ammunition. 2. The Catholic who suspects all intellectuals will have ammunition, too. If, he may well reason, an intellectual—for I assume Mr. Molnar would wish to be so classified—can be so easily taken in as to see what is simply not there to the degree to which Mr. Molnar has seen it, and can at the same time dispose condescendingly of the "austere censors" who would condemn the work, then what is the point in wishing to be or in respecting the intel-

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lectual? Finally, I would suggest that one would be on safe ground in suspecting the critical credentials of a reviewer who can write that *"Lolita's* originality is that it speaks of the unspeakable in such a manner that it becomes credible, understandable, almost normal." Frankly, I find none of these adjectives applicable to Mr. Molnar's review.

(Dom) D. BERNARD THEALL, O.S.B.
Catholic University of America.

REPLY

New York, N. Y.

TO THE EDITORS: As I have predicted in my review, there is now a *"Lolita* case," even though of miniature proportions. As it happens, the accused is not so much the book (it is simply the devil's work), as the reviewer.

What is my crime? Agreeing with T. S. Eliot that "the 'greatness' of literature cannot be determined solely by literary standards, [but] that whether it is literature or not can be determined only by literary standards," I neglected to saddle my shoulders with a censor who would pull my hair each time I found enjoyment in a brilliant passage, a humorous description, a piece of deft sarcasm directed at people, institutions —or Humbert himself.

In my critic's view this enjoyment is scandalous on two accounts: *primo,* I seem to condone Humbert's immorality; *secundo,* I display poor taste as a literary reviewer.

Dom Bernard will be, no doubt, surprised to read that I too deplore the Kinsey report, the publicity around it, and the fact that it aims at elevating mere (and questionable) statistical data to the rank of a moral norm. The fact that something *is,* does not mean that it *ought to be. Lolita,* however, is not a report on the sexual habits of the human male, it does not aspire to the rank of a universal truth, and does not intend to set a moral standard. It is the confession of a self-admitted civic and moral outcast who suffers more from, than delights in, his predicament. "I perceive what is Good and approve it," Saint Augustine said, "yet I follow Evil." In his own way, Humbert repeats these words many times while he spirals down, ever faster, on the serpentine road of corruption.

But again, a literary work cannot be praised or blamed on moral grounds *alone.* It has (or has not) other qualities which recommend it to the reader. I tried to convey some of *Lolita's* qualities as it can be read in the first passage quoted by Dom Bernard, where, it will be observed, there is no trace of moral endorsement, no trace of approval, no trace of a recommendation that we all follow Humbert's example. And elsewhere I also stated something which appeared to me crucial: that we cannot leap to the defense of the girl *because* (if I may quote myself) "Lolita remains unknown to us . . . existing only through the lustful gaze of her stepfather. She remains an object, perhaps even to herself, and only at the very end, as a teen-age mother, married to a simpleton and comically serious in her vulgarity, does she become human, no longer a corrupt little animal, and no longer a nymphet."

At the risk of appearing immodest, I consider the above passage *literary* criticism. To put it another way: if Lolita had been my neighbor, I would have called the police upon learning what was going on between her and her stepfather; as the reviewer of a work of *imagination,* I shall neither call the police, nor put dynamite under the publisher's desk; I shall appraise the work according to my own lights on the writer's craft.

But then I am told that I am not competent to do even that. From the bench of immoral reviewers I am asked to move over to the bench of poor critics, without being enlightened by my competent prosecutor what literary criticism *is,* and why I am suspected of lacking "critical credentials." What a predicament, and how I envy Dom Bernard, so well equipped with the censor's credentials! He knows how to discourse about moral decadence, how to cast suspicion on writer, critic, even on "a certain type of reader," and finally, how to give a heavy-handed warning to the publication which dared print the review.

It is not my task to defend The Commonweal. But I accept no lesson from Dom Bernard as to the tasks of intellectuals, among which the most important is not to be intimidated either by the reader "who suspects all intellectuals," or by censors, for that matter. As to the issue of literary criticism to which Dom Bernard, a professional book reviewer (as he tells us), ought to have given at least some attention, I hope that the reader, while not "taken in" by reviewers, will equally refuse to be taken in by the censors. At least until such time as the censors will not limit themselves to the expression of moral indignation, but condescend to speak of literature when literature is debated.

THOMAS MOLNAR.

APPEALS FROM INDIA

Two Salesian youth centers in Manipur, North India, seek assistance for the coming winter. Rev. A. M. Ravalico needs blankets and pull-overs for his many destitute charges at Imphal; he can purchase these in Calcutta at a reasonable price. Rev. P. Bianchi, S.D.B., of Don Bosco School of Ukhrul, tells of the equipment and buildings his center greatly needs and of the pests attacking the vital rice paddies of Manipur and threatening with famine a people already badly undernourished. Donations for either, or both, may be sent to Salesian Missions, 148 Main St., New Rochelle, N.Y.

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Familiar Phantoms in the Country of Capote

BREAKFAST AT TIFFANY'S. By Truman Capote. Random House. $3.50.

By ALICE ELLEN MAYHEW

IN THE TITLE story, and longest piece, of his new collection, Truman Capote changes his set from the decaying mansions of the Southern back country to Manhattan's East Side. His main character (her Cartier card reads: *Miss Holiday Golightly, Traveling*) expresses herself in an odd mixture of tough talk, cosmopolite chatter and French salutations. But the veneer is thin. The familiar Capote phantoms try to haunt the stage—love, absent and somber—and Mr. Capote re-examines those rare, childlike moments of promise in lives that seem otherwise destined for loneliness.

Because his lovers are, most often, children and older people who really are still children, and because the objects of their love are sometimes unrealistic, Mr. Capote appears, at first, whimsical. But his accusations are not capricious. His disparate matings point up the allegory of love's freakish status in the world. Though we have accepted its conventional modes, we have never learned that it must be free, various and all-encompassing. The old judge, in his earlier book, *The Grass Harp,* says, "We are speaking of love. A leaf, a handful of seed—begin with these, learn a little what it is to love. First, a leaf, a fall of rain, then someone to receive what a leaf has taught you, what a fall of rain has ripened. No easy process, understand; it could take a lifetime, it has mine, and still I've never mastered it—I only know how true it is: that love is a chain of love, as nature is a chain of life." And there are, in Mr. Capote's pieces, those who seem to have a queer potentiality for love; they are eccentric or under-age. Miss Dolly Talbo, one of his elderly "children," answers, "Then I've been in love all my life," as she recounts the mementos of her affection: the color pink, a dried honeycomb, an empty hornet's nest, a jaybird's egg, her Negro friend, a little boy. Miss Golightly's collection is more sophisticated bits and ends: horses, a dumb-but-tender brother, a narcotics king, a Brazilian diplomat, a nameless cat, and the quiet dignity of Tiffany Jewelers. But Miss Dolly Talbo comments on the isolation. For these characters to divulge the habit of love (and they invariably do, being congenitally blabby) is foolishness because, "It's best not to show such things, it burdens people and makes them, I don't know why, unhappy."

Truman Capote's spare and beautiful prose, as well as his theme, recalls, somewhat, the work of Carson McCullers, who also writes with deceptive simplicity and underlying intensity of odd-assorted lovers. Often, Mrs. McCullers' heroes outgrow their strange predilections or destroy them. Their affairs flourish briefly in spite of their eccentricity as presentiments or symbols of that power. Mr. Capote's lovers, those whom the world has not corrupted, hold the outside permanently in abeyance with the single-minded assurance of the simple. They are bound to each other because they can hear the silent explosions of love. They are the world's waifs. Not unexpectedly, they are almost all orphans.

This, by way of comparing Truman Capote's most recent orphan, because he is a writer of enormous talent and sensitivity; yet, there is, unquestionably, a quality of slickness about *Breakfast At Tiffany's.* The flavor has changed from bittersweet to acid. Now we are asked to accept a child-woman, a bad-little-good-girl (I would have preferred it the other way round) who, even in the context of very broad comedy, strains our credulity and patience; who declares her love with, "I'd stop smoking if he asked me to," assures us that she'd rather have cancer than a dishonest heart, and refers to death as the fat woman. To be sure, this is Miss Golightly at her worst moments, and she has some genuinely affecting and humorous ones. Of course, it all comes out in the end that Miss Golightly, alias Lulamae Barnes, was a child-wife from Tulip, Texas, long before we met her picking her way through Twenty-One and El Morocco, by way of Hollywood, and with a means of support all too visible. But, unlike *Other Voices, Other Rooms* with its sinister cravings of desire, or the poignant, tentative loves in *The Grass Harp,* Mr. Capote has to *tell* us that Miss Golightly is a genuine personality and not just a very clever stage device. This necessitates embarassing little speeches which do not proceed naturally from the core of the writing: ". . . it's better to look at the sky than live there. Such an empty place; so vague. Just a country where thunder goes and things disappear," she says.

The end of the story devolves into a razzle-dazzle of vaudeville. The police pursue Miss Golightly because of an innocent involvement in a dope ring, her Brazilian lover, sensitive to scandal, hastily departs, and she jumps bail to disappear from our sight forever, with only a tearful regret for her abandoned cat. Later on, there is a card from South America, enigmatic and deliberately high-spirited and, still later, an African mask turns up that bears a striking resemblance to Holly Golightly. We are left with our madcap memories and a pious desire that she has arrived where she belongs but we are unaffected by such tricks upon the sentiments. Mr. Capote, himself, has spoiled us for them.

The other three stories are little more than vignettes, distinguishable only because of Mr. Capote's easy way with the language. "House of Flowers," the same title and locale as his Broadway musical, is a sort of slice-of-folk-life plus moral. "A Diamond Guitar," the relationship of two prisoners who attempt an escape, is primarily a story of un-

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requited love, inchoate and diffuse. Only "A Christmas Memory" is reminiscent of Capote's earlier work, but it seems more as if the author were imitating himself in this story of the old woman and the small boy, each other's best friend, and their last Christmas together. It is written in tender colloquial style and fairly brimming over with Poignance!

Theme of Our Time

DESERT LOVE. By Henri de Montherlant. Translated by Alec Brown. Noonday. $3.50.

By RICHARD GILMAN

ONE OF the reasons why some people were shocked by *Lolita* and why literature always shocks certain minds is that they do not distinguish between terrain and strategy in a work. That is to say, what field an author finds himself on is not nearly as important as the ways he devises of getting across. Thus *Lolita,* though it deals with an objectively erotic and even perverse situation, is not an erotic book at all. If anything, it is anti-erotic; it is really about the abyss between the sensual in practice and in thought, about the confusion of realms.

Sex in the head, D. H. Lawrence called it. It is one of the major themes of our time, and in the right hands is a philosophical inquiry, an attempt to get things in their right relation. It is the theme of Henri de Montherlant's *Desert Love,* a novel which will upset the same people who found *Lolita* inadmissible.

Like *Lolita, Desert Love* is concerned with the craving of a mature man for a distressingly young girl, in this case the hunter being a thirty-year-old French lieutenant in Algeria and his quarry an Arab girl of fourteen. No other comparisons between the two books seem in order, since they differ widely in emphasis and style, but their authors have at least this in common: they are both genuine artists and they are both aware that lust is never its own explanation.

Lucien Auligny, the lieutenant, is from one point of view a mediocre man of narrow outlook, so conventionally patriotic as to deserve the description "living tricolor" which someone pins on him. But in his author's mind he is also "great-hearted," wanting the good in an exceptionally blind and clumsy way. Stationed at a remote Algerian post (the time is 1932), he feels the need of stimulation and contrives to get for his mistress a beautiful, "unconscious" and earthy young Arab girl he has fixed his eye on.

The transaction is sordid and has a bizarre condition: Auligny is to be permitted everything except full possession. Still, he accepts the terms out of his immeasurable naiveté. But he is educated quickly enough. For the first time in his life he is involved with another, and the responsibility staggers him. He has now to account for his rising desire as well as the girl's existence, to find out what he really wants,

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what the relationship is between the flesh and spirit, and what has brought about the gulf between men and women. He is discovering the bitter complications of love.

Love, or rather his hopelessly confused idea of it, is what undoes him. For in asking this innocent, mindless and alien girl to grant him not really her body (the contract's restrictive clause is soon broken) but her soul, to want the carnal, and not even the truly carnal but some caricature of it, to yield up the spiritual, Auligny makes a fatal demand. The girl inevitably leaves him, mockingly, and there crashes down the whole complicated edifice he has built, his dream of a rapprochement between France and her conquered colony through the symbolic power of the love affair between himself, the living tricolor, and this nondescript Arab girl.

Against Auligny's muddled sentimentality, de Montherlant briefly places the figure of one Guiscart, a wealthy aristocrat whose only aim in life is seduction, who ticks off his conquests methodically, getting no satisfaction except from the thought of the next affair, and for whom absolute freedom from relationships is the highest good. He is an ironic creation, a satirical portrait of the modern statistical sensualist as well as of the eternal chaser after the one ultimate satisfaction, but he is also clearly intended to provide by his detachment, singleness of purpose and, as his author only half ironically says, purity of motive, a contrast to Auligny's inner chaos.

At least, de Montherlant is saying, Guiscart makes no tragic blunders, confuses no orders of being and recognizes his own condition. The harm he does is limited, whereas Auligny, in his attempt to build bridges, is fated to bring on the flood. But de Montherlant's own position is beyond either of his characters'. He is one of the authentic pessimists of our time, a writer with a savage hatred of mediocrity, civilized self-deception and sentimentality, and one who despairs profoundly of any possible reunion of the disparate elements of our experience.

He is a chilly writer whom no one would ever dream of loving or taking as a mentor, and his work is marred by much self-conscious interposition, as is Bernanos' and Celine's, with whom he has certain affinities. In France he has a secure reputation, latterly as a dramatist, but also many literary enemies who dislike his penchant for intruding in his creation, and personal detractors put off by his aristocratic, arrogrant, scornful stances.

Yet for all his idiosyncratic flaws, he is more worth reading than all but a handful of contemporaries. The angry man, the literary Attila, is never on the highest level of creation. But he may be very profitably occupied somewhat below, tearing down false structures that hide the view of the summit.

A Charmed Life

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MARK VAN DOREN. Harcourt, Brace. $5.75.

By GERALD WEALES

ON CERTAIN days, when I am miles from Broadway and 116th Street, I begin to believe that Mark Van Doren is a myth. The students of a college always invent their faculty, as any teacher knows; so it is not surprising that Columbia College created and sustained its own image of Van Doren. It was

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not simply his own students who took part in the creation; all of us, whether we took classes from him or not shared a sense of Mark Van Doren. The image is an indistinct one. It cannot be put precisely, but the words *warmth* and *wisdom* are relevant; so too are *peace* and *pain* —although these last may be simply likely extensions of the man's impressively ascetic face. Exact definition lay just beyond our reach. When the *Autobiography* was announced for publication, it seemed likely that the man himself might put his finger—perhaps inadvertently—on the quality that persists in escaping a definitive label. I am not certain that he has done so. The Mark Van Doren in my mind lies somewhere just the other side of these pages, although he can be seen dimly now and then through the events that he describes.

Here, then, is a book about the places that Mark Van Doren has lived, about the people he has known and loved, about the things he has done, the classes he has taught, the books he has written. There is an affectionate picture of the Van Doren family at Hope and, later, at Urbana, and a continuing and formative admiration for his father and his brother Carl. We see Van Doren as a graduate student at Columbia, as a scholarship traveler in London and Paris, as a very tentative lieutenant on domestic duty in World War I, as a reviewer and editor at the *Nation*, as a beginning teacher at Columbia and as a young poet. He tells us the impetus and the method that led to his books, and he tries to share some of the sense of home that the houses in Greenwich Village and Cornwall, Connecticut, have for him. His wife, his sons, his friends, his students are warmly present on every page, part of the charmed circle of his life and his book.

It is this sense of "charmed" life that gives the autobiography its special quality. Although there is a record of losses in the book, too, benign influences seem to hover over the author, leading him easily from Illinois to New York to Connecticut, from the student body to the faculty, from the tentative gestures of the writer to publication and acceptance. There is no sense of struggle, no impression of obstacles, no hint of despair. Van Doren mentions that he has a temper, suggests that he is a little vain, once uses the word *despise,* but these are momentary and uncertain ripples on the steady flow of what can only be called a *good* life. He seems to move through the academic labyrinth and the New York literary jungle without losing his sense of shelter and warmth.

Long ago his brother Carl said of him that he was "apparently frank, actually impenetrable." The words still seem to suit him. It is difficult to accept that the man is completely present in this book. It seems to be instead, a book of reminiscence that chooses to remember all that is most pleasant to call to mind. And, yet, there is an implicit definition in the fact that the autobiography should take that tone, should communicate such a sense of well-being. "I should not like to think I am complacent, or lucky, or deluded, or merely pleased," he writes toward the end of the book. "It is more positive than that. By some odd chance and for no good reason, I am happy." Perhaps, after all, happiness is that uncertain quality that I came to this book to discover. Those of us who believe in happiness—even though we glimpse it only fleetingly—have in *The Autobiography of Mark Van Doren* a testimony to its reality. Perhaps Mark Van Doren *is* a myth and this book his mythology. Let us listen closely. He may be Jack with some almost forgotten knowledge of a Beanstalk that will lead up to an undiscovered country where the giant holds out a hand of welcome and the goose lays, not golden eggs, but golden days.

REVIEWERS

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